IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows, substituting any amended claim(s) for the corresponding pending claim(s):

Claims 1-3. (cancelled)

4. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 3~~ claim 21, wherein the weakest ~~forward~~ soft handoff link is determined based upon the strength of corresponding pilot signals, as measured and reported by ~~mobile terminal~~each mobile unit in communication with the given cell sector or cell site having soft handoff links between M or more cell sectors or cell sites.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 4, wherein a plurality of reports of pilot signal strengths are used in conjunction with averaging operations to determine the weakest ~~forward~~ soft handoff link.

Claims 6-7. (cancelled)

8 (currently amended) A method for managing Walsh Codes in a Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) cellular wireless communication system, the method comprises:

assigning a plurality of Walsh Codes to each of a plurality of serviced mobile terminals, wherein each of a plurality of Walsh Codes servicing a mobile terminal corresponds to respective ~~forward link~~ soft handoff link transmissions and each of the plurality of Walsh codes is used by each cell or sector participating in hand-off for the serviced mobile terminals for covering its soft handoff link transmissions;

determining that an insufficient number of unused Walsh Codes are available; and

limiting the number of ~~forward links~~ soft handoff links that can be employed for each of the plurality of mobile terminals to thereby limit the number of Walsh Codes being employed by:

terminating ~~at least one forward link~~ a weakest soft handoff link for at least some of the plurality of mobile terminals; and

reducing the number of cell sectors or cell sites to limit ~~limiting~~ the number of ~~forward links~~ soft handoff links that can be employed for hand-off, and repeating the terminating of the weakest soft handoff link for at least some of the plurality of serviced mobile terminals.

9. (cancelled)

10. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 9~~ claim 8, wherein the respective ~~weakest forward link~~ weakest soft handoff link is determined based upon the strength of corresponding pilot signals, as measured and reported by the mobile terminal.

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 10, wherein a plurality of reports of pilot signal strengths are used in conjunction with averaging operations to determine the ~~weakest forward link~~ weakest soft handoff link.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 8, wherein terminating at least one ~~forward link~~ soft handoff link participating for at least some of the plurality of mobile terminals further comprises:

terminating a ~~weakest forward link~~ weakest soft handoff link for each mobile terminal being serviced by five forward links; and

terminating two ~~weakest forward link~~ weakest soft handoff links for each mobile unit being serviced by six forward links.

Claims 13-15. (Cancelled).

16. (currently amended) The base station controller of ~~claim 15~~ claim 22, wherein the base station controller determines the ~~respective weakest forward link~~ weakest soft handoff link based upon the strength of corresponding pilot signals, as measured and reported by ~~the mobile terminal~~ each mobile unit in communication with the given cell sector or cell site having soft handoff links between M or more cell sectors or cell sites.

17. (currently amended) The base station controller of claim 16, wherein a plurality of reports of pilot signal strengths are used in conjunction with averaging operations to determine the ~~weakest forward link~~ weakest soft handoff link.

Claims 18-19. (Cancelled).

20. (currently amended) The base station controller of ~~claim 14~~ claim 22, wherein the base station controller operates consistent with IS-95A, IS-95B, 1xRTT, or 1xEV-DO operating standards.

21. (New) A method for managing Walsh Codes in a wireless communications network comprising the steps of:

determining when a given communications cell sector or cell site has fewer than N unused Walsh Codes, where N is a pre-set integer, thereby blocking new call setups or new hand-offs by the given cell sector or cell site;

when the given communications cell sector or cell site has fewer than N unused Walsh Codes, for each mobile unit in communication with the given cell sector or cell site having soft handoff links between M or more cell sectors or cell sites, where M is an integer, determining the weakest soft handoff link with the given cell sector or cell site and causing that link to be dropped thereby increasing the unused Walsh Codes at the given cell sector or cell site; and

in the event that the preceding step fails to increase the number of unused Walsh Codes and the number of cell sectors or cell sites M, where M is greater than a predetermined lesser number of soft handoff links S, where S is an integer, reducing the number of cell sectors or cell sites M by one and repeat the steps of determining the weakest soft handoff link and causing that link to be dropped.

22. (New) A base station controller that supports Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) operations, the base station controller comprises:

a Mobile Switching Center (MSC) interface that interfaces the base station controller to a MSC;

at least one base station interface that interfaces the base station controller to a plurality of base stations; and

at least one digital processor coupled to the base station interface and to the MSC interface; and

a plurality of software instructions that are executed by the processor, the plurality of software instructions including:

software instructions that, upon execution by the processor, cause the base station controller to determine when a given communications cell sector or cell site has fewer than N unused Walsh Codes, where N is a pre-set integer, thereby blocking new call setups or new hand-offs by the given communications cell sector or cell site;

software instructions that, upon execution by the processor, cause the base station controller to, when the given communications cell sector or cell site has fewer than N unused Walsh Codes, for each mobile unit in communication with the given cell sector or cell site having soft handoff links between M or more cell sectors or cell sites, where M is an integer, determine the weakest soft handoff link with the given communications cell sector or cell site and causing that link to be dropped thereby increasing the unused Walsh Codes at the given cell sector or cell site; and

software instructions that, upon execution by the processor, cause the base station controller to, in the event that the preceding step fails to increase the number of unused Walsh Codes and the number of cell sectors or cell sites M, where M is greater than a predetermined lesser number of soft handoff links S, where S is an integer, reduce the number of cell sectors or cell sites M by one and repeat the steps of determining the weakest soft handoff link and causing that link to be dropped.